



## Why isn't personal life relevant?

I don't think even her greatest fans will argue that Theresa May's time as Prime Minister has been a success. Conversely, I don't think even her greatest detractors would argue that she is anything other than a fundamentally decent human being. Boring, possibly; ineffective, maybe; but decent? That's pretty much unarguable. And she gave her all.

And yet, if the polls among Conservative party members are even remotely correct, as our next Prime Minister we have someone who has broken at least eight of the Ten Commandments: and that's just in what is publicly known. He seems to get on with his parents, so I'm making a judgement that he 'honours his mother and father', and I'm pretty certain he hasn't committed a murder. Beyond that...

What's interesting is that the relevant electorate have decided that that just doesn't matter. And there is a sense in which they are right. For example, in many ways, Winston Churchill was an awful human being; and yet, when it came to someone who had the guts to lead Britain through the War, it's hard to know who else could have done it. The American public made a similar decision about Donald Trump. Here was someone who admitted that he would 'grab women's pussies', and who had a series of affairs which he paid vast sums of money to cover up, but that wasn't enough, and he was voted in, despite every political commentator being against him because he was such an odious, stupid egotist.

On one level, in all this, there is perhaps a healthy sense that people, even leaders, have feet of clay; one shouldn't expect perfect role models. And one of the lessons of John Major's ill-fated 'Back to Basics' campaign was that you just couldn't rely on politicians to be moral, in what was a conventional sense.

To me, however, the pendulum has swung too far. It seems to me that there is a coherent pattern behind our future Prime Minister's selfish and flippant approach to his private life and to the way he approaches public office. Grand gestures, and flip remarks abound; and when the consequences are problematic, he just runs away from them, washing his hands of all responsibility, and then scoffing from the sidelines about the people who are left trying to clear up the mess he has left behind. This *should* be relevant. However, in the election campaign, his opponents have studiously avoided bringing up his personal life. That has shown admirable restraint, but I find the imminent result pretty depressing. It must be possible that there is someone in the United Kingdom who is both effective in their job, and not a disaster as a human being. Couldn't we have just one of those as our next Prime Minister?

Instead, the man who will be laying wreaths on behalf of the nation at the cenotaph on Remembrance Day, or who will be needed to comfort victims after terrorist attacks is one whose sense of personal morality is largely a void. How come this isn't a factor?